

# Harrison's *Stolen*: Addressing Aboriginal and Indigenous Islanders Human Rights

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**Abstract**—According to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, every human being is entitled to rights in life that should be respected by others and protected by the state and community. Such rights are inherent regardless of colour, ethnicity, gender, religion or otherwise, and it is expected that all humans alike have the right to live without discrimination of any sort. However, that has not been the case with Aborigines in Australia. Over a long period of time, the governments of the State and the Territories and the Australian Commonwealth denied the Aboriginal and Indigenous inhabitants of the Torres Strait Islands such rights. Past Australian governments set policies and laws that enabled them to forcefully remove Indigenous children from their parents, which resulted in creating lost generations living the trauma of the loss of cultural identity, alienation and even their own selfhood. Intending to reduce that population of natives and their Aboriginal culture while, on the other hand, assimilate them into mainstream society, they gave themselves the right to remove them from their families with no hope of return. That practice has led to tragic consequences due to the trauma that has affected those children, an experience that is depicted by Jane Harrison in her play *Stolen*. The drama is the outcome of a six-year project on lost children and which was first performed in 1997 in Melbourne. Five actors only appear on the stage, playing the role of all the different characters, whether the main protagonists or the remaining cast, present or non-present ones as voices. The play outlines the life of five children who have been taken from their parents at an early age, entailing a disastrous negative impact that differs from one to the other. Unknown to each other, what connects between them is being put in a children's home. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the play's text in light of the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, using it as a lens that reflects the atrocities practiced against the Aborigines. It highlights how such practices formed an outrageous violation of those natives' rights as human beings. Harrison's dramatic technique in conveying the children's experiences is through a non-linear structure, fluctuating between past and present that are linked together within each of the five characters, reflecting their suffering and pain to create an emotional link between them and the audience. Her dramatic handling of the issue by fusing tragedy with humour as well as symbolism is a successful technique in revealing the traumatic memory of those children and their present life. The play has made a difference in commencing to address the problem of the right of all children to be with their families, which renders the real meaning of having a home and an identity as people.

**Keywords**—Aboriginal, audience, Australia, children, culture, drama, home, human rights, identity, indigenous, Jane Harrison, memory, scenic effects, setting, stage, stage directions, *Stolen*, trauma.

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## I. THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

FOLLOWING the disasters terminating World War II (1939-1945) and its aftermath, the United Nations organisation was established, and in 1948, its General Assembly proclaimed the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR). It set basic essential rights for human beings to ensure that all peoples and nations around the globe would respect the freedom of every individual [1]-[3]. The Declaration accentuates the right of every person to be free without any discrimination, pronouncing in its articles, different aspects of life where this is to be respected and maintained. The Preamble to the document introduces its Articles with the statement that the Declaration is set:

...as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance [1].

As such, there was a primary goal to advocate and endorse the equality and freedom of people. Its difficult task was in setting it for a fair universal application and not targeting certain countries of the world as, for instance, the western world [4]. Implementation meant addressing injustice found anywhere in different areas. In his edited report on the Declaration, Brown supports that it is "an unprecedented educational and cultural force", upholding that any "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" [5]. Yet, despite the UDHR proclamation, the colonial governments of the State and the Territories and the Australian Commonwealth maintained their atrocious practices against the original inhabitants, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, which they started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued till the late 20<sup>th</sup>. In view of the UDHR's articles relevant to the text, this paper will analyse Jane Harrison's play, *Stolen*. It will give a brief historical background of the Aboriginal and Indigenous Islanders' tortured experiences in Australia as an action to abolish them on their land. It will then provide an analysis of the play, reflecting the authorities' violation of its original inhabitants' human rights, especially those of mixed race or half-caste children, which eventually led to its being described by several writers and activists as genocide [6]-[10]. The paper will also reveal how Harrison succeeded in presenting the Aboriginal tragedy to the wide Australian public, especially the non-Aboriginal/Indigenous audience who were mostly unaware of the extent of that issue. Her play had a

positive effect that also participated in the later issuing of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) in 2007, giving them their basic rights as inhabitants of the land. The analysis will end with further recommendations for Aboriginal research on the turbulences of its victims.

## II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The colonial Australian State and the Territories governments were deeply involved in the process of the Stolen Generations. They set laws that allowed them to perform such actions, whereby Aboriginal children were forcefully removed from their families and communities without any consent, put in welfare institutions run by the government, the church or charity, left in surrogate or foster homes, or advertised for domestic work or adoption by white families [10], [12] (see Fig. 1), presumably to provide them with better education and a better living than among their communities. The majority of cases were placed in the Welfare institutions that did not grant them any rights. The National Museum of Australia gives a painful description of life in such an institution, stating that: "It was a dormitory system of child management with its concomitant mass feeding of a dull uniform diet and a rigid authoritarian form of schooling and training. Once the child became an inmate, parents were relatively powerless to assert their rights. The future destiny of their child was in the hands of the State" [12]. As a result, in the majority of cases – if not all – they rarely found one another or ever got reunited but, alongside that, they were prohibited from seeing each other again. That practice, as Nicholls puts it, "could be described as genocidal in intent, and tragic in its consequences" [10]. Those children were then initially considered as the Lost Generation.



Fig. 1 A 1934 newspaper clipping advertising half-caste Aboriginal children for adoption [11]

Lost Generation was the term used to describe those children of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, specifically in 1981, when Professor Peter Read, the Australian historian documenting Aboriginal history, coined it as the Stolen Generations [13]-[15]. Though

the original inhabitants of the land, they were denied their rights, not only in their homeland, but even in keeping their own children. Consequently, that resulted in generations suffering from such a traumatic experience not only of cultural loss, but also the alienation of their own selves. They were seized from their whole environment, parents, families, and languages which comprised their whole identity. The authorities' strategic goal had a racist approach towards assimilating them into the mainstream Australian society, and thus, be raised as 'white', become educated and fail to recall their cultural origin. That process followed no respect for Aboriginal identity but headed towards the development and assimilation of a white Australian society, so "all persons of Aboriginal blood or mixed blood in Australia will live like white Australians do" [16]. That was defined by the 1951 National Welfare Conference [16] which reverberated the same idea of the 1937 one, targeting the discrimination and elimination of any Aboriginal blood. It was inhuman and harsh in how they got hold of the inhabitants of the land since the colonial times. According to Notaras, "Aborigines were hunted like animals from their tribal lands and by the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century reduced to desperate poverty. Considered to be a race that served no useful purpose, the government sought to eliminate all traces of Aborigines and their culture" [17], leaving a negative and traumatic impact on their people. With an ongoing debate on the Stolen Generations and in response to a national inquiry on that by Aboriginal organisations as early as 1992, the *Bringing Them Home Report- National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families* [18] was issued in May 1997, exposing the injustices that happened to the Aboriginal communities by the white Australian government. It presents the picture of the past history of the country and its disastrous nature which not all Australians were aware of and also demands an apology from the Government to the native Australians. The Report includes actual miserable stories of removed Aborigines. One of the documented reports is Carmel Bird's, *The Stolen Children, Their Stories* [19], and commenting in it on the *Bringing Them Home Report*, she recounts miserable and distressing stories that those children faced, delineating how horrifying their forced removal policy was. In her introduction to the book, she writes:

No two words strike deeper into the human heart than the words 'stolen children'. Nothing is more valuable to us than our children, nothing so irreplaceable, so precious, so beloved. The history of white Australians is marred by children lost in the bush, children spirited away by unknown agents. The stories of these children have become the stuff of myth, icons of horror, and they ring with the notes of darkest nightmare. How must it be, then, to be such children, stolen children? How must it be to be children who have been snatched from their mothers and systematically stripped of culture, language, rights and dignity? To be such children who grow to be adults within the very society that visited these crimes upon them [19].

That tragic phenomenon has been dramatised by Harrison in *Stolen*, which was first produced in 1997 in Melbourne. An Indigenous Australian, the playwright's origin comes from the Murawari descent in New South Wales [20]. In 1992 she was hired by the Ilbjerri Theatre Company to write a play delineating the experience of those children [21], which was the most atrocious experience in Australian history. That drama is the product of a research project on lost children that took six years to complete. The process of writing it, as Harrison states in her note to the publication of this 2002 edition, "took six years, four workshops and many tears to get to the stage. Tears of those who shared their stories, my tears as I discovered these truths for the first time, tears of frustration that we all felt at the time and effort it was taking to get this project up, not to mention tears of self-doubt" [22]. It was a painful eye-opening experience to get it into the light so the Australian community could realize that black part of their history through *Stolen*.

### III. ANALYSIS OF THE PLAY

#### A. Human Rights Violation as Portrayed in "Stolen"

Influenced by the innumerable actual experiences that Harrison heard from stolen children [23], [24], *Stolen* sketches the lives of five Aboriginal half-caste characters in the Cranby Children's Home [22]. Anonymous to each other, three females, Ruby, Shirley, and Anne and two males, Jimmy and Sandy comprise the whole cast of the play. They perform their own roles besides those of the other characters who are either present or just non-present ones heard as offstage voices. The play commences with them as children and throughout the action, they move inconsistently in time between childhood and adulthood with the telling of their own diverse past narratives. This runs till the last episode in which they are not children any more but in their reality as adults, about to reach 'home' in its connotative sense. The children's plight in the play reflects how they suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This is because of their being victimised as Stolen Generations. Such mental anxiety disorder is instigated by dire stressful, petrifying, and traumatic events that the person him/herself has either witnessed or lived. This eventually makes it difficult for the person to cope or adapt at times, besides suffering from nightmares and other psychological disorders as an outcome [25]-[27]. This anxiety is what they all pass through, even though their ages differ. Though not of the same age group, as they are mostly younger than Shirley who begins the play as a grandmother yet, without exception, they all suffer from the trauma of being stolen from their mothers when young. The situation echoes how stolen children in Australia belong to different generations, not only one. Those characters feel imprisoned in their distressing experiences in relative degrees and their tragedy projects their loss of culture, self, land and languages which, to them, formulate their own identity as Aborigines and Indigenous peoples.

The setting of the stage is very simple and minimal; it is a welfare institution with very few pieces of furniture where the

five children are put. Besides serving several locations in the action, the props described in the stage directions symbolise the characters' plight of a life void of meaning.

Five old iron institutional beds alternate across the stage. The beds are the base of the five main characters, representing their homes at various stages of their lives.

At times they become: a children's home; a prison cell; a mental institution; and a girl's bedroom [22].

However, there are differences in the state of two beds, Anne's and Jimmy's, pointing to some distinction. Anne's covers are better than those of the others that are "old, drab, chenille" [22], as she has been adopted by rich white parents at whose home her narrative lies. On the other hand, Jimmy's bed is turned the other way around so that the audience see the head with its iron bars, a reminder of his jail cell where he spent time imprisoned as per his respective narrative. No other props are used, with the exception of a metal filing cabinet and pale blinds. The setting gives the sense of its initially being a dull place for children to stay, yet also signifying the loneliness of the characters who are imprisoned within their introvert selves.

At the home, the characters narrate their different stories that mostly share the common element of post-removal abuse. The trauma of their experiences damages them in all psychological, physical, and cultural aspects, viewing themselves robbed of anything related to their humanity as free selves. Attempting to proceed with their situation, flashbacks of their harrowing experiences keep recurring to each one. Moreover, the movement between past and present in the children's narrative scenes brings with it the agony of their reminiscences, besides the negative impact of the removal policy and welfare institutions they are in.

That damaging impact is reverberated in each narrative respectively and reflects the violation of several of the articles of the UDHR. The fundamental rights documented in the Declaration as the right of being "born free and equal in dignity and rights", the right to all its indicated freedoms without discrimination, the rights to "life, liberty and security" without "slavery or servitude", as well as the rights to not being "subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment" [1] were not heeded by the local authorities despite the fact that Australia was one of the main countries that participated in drafting and signing the Declaration [28], [29].

Such violation of rights is presented in the children's different stories. They are subjected to torture, verbal and sexual abuse, are ill-treated and forced into servitude in white families' homes while still in their early teens. Being forcibly removed from her parents, Ruby has been driven to domestic work since very young and is repeatedly sexually abused. Jimmy is both sexually and physically abused, which has negatively affected the development of his character so that he considers himself a worthless being. Shirley is presented as someone who is living the suffering of two generations at the same time; on the one hand, she suffers as a stolen child of her own generation, whereas on the other, she suffers as the mother of two stolen children who she cannot locate. As for Anne, she seems to be in a better material status than the other

children in the institution. She is a child adopted by white parents and has her own room at their place, but she has no idea about her Aboriginal origin as that is kept a secret by her adoptive parents. Lastly, Sandy is homeless with nowhere to go and confirms he is “always on the run” [22] to escape from the government. All are psychologically traumatised, though in different ratios. Such an atmosphere is transmitted to the audience, with rising tension. The details Harrison describes in the stage directions of the “Arriving” [22] scene are quite expressive towards that effect:

With the house lights still up and ominous music heard, the actors walk in from the rear of the stage; each holding a suitcase, they stand diagonally across the stage. They look out into the audience, acknowledging those they recognise, their eyes searching the audience for compassion.

Then each of the actors slips into their character as a child. Their body language changes, and they speak over the top of one another and in the ‘stream of consciousness’ style of the very young. They talk about home, family –especially their mothers and fathers. Their voices are full of hope, but tinged with sadness. The cue to finish is:

Ruby: My mum’s coming for me [22].

The menacing music heard before the characters’ entrance on stage together with Ruby’s dreamy statement involve the audience with an escalating tension that is intensified with the second scene, “Adult Flashes”, when Ruby keeps rocking and singing a “crazy lullaby” [22]. The dramatist’s technique here of introducing such an atmosphere creates an uncomfortable feeling in the audience, who is further introduced to the rest of the characters. The children familiarise the audience with their agony and so invite the spectators into their plight. In this manner, the audience can grasp those characters’ traumatic experience as stolen children who are maltreated and harmed by the Welfare institution system [12].

#### *B. Impact of the UDHR Violation on the Stolen Characters*

Each child’s individual narrative varies and is contrasted with the rest in its consequences, all of which are miserably tragic. Torn between their roles as children and as adults, they are in a state of confusion as lost identities, and have no control over their own lives, for they are under the control of the white society that defies any respect to the rights of Aboriginal and Indigenous community. In the different scenes, the children move rapidly to flashbacks from their past childhood, then instantly return back to their present reality as adults. The only exception is Ruby, who does not have any childhood memories. That non-linear structure of the children’s experiences is very indicative; it is mainly presented as such by the dramatist to reveal that their own distracted lives have no sense of either time or meaning. No chronology is followed in the order of the scenes and not one child’s narrative flows coherently; it is made of inconsistent events that mirror the inconsistency of their lives. The time factor is missing and the scenes do not follow any conventional numbering but are rather titled as disconnected

episodes. Tragically, that is their status; they are lifeless characters dragging on their days, mostly without hopes for any promising future. Each of them narrates her/his story, displaying pitiful cases of incoherent lives.

#### *1. Ruby*

To start with Ruby, was stolen from her mother when very young and does not recollect any past reminiscences. She has recurrently been sexually abused as a child. White people visit the institution at weekends to choose children and take them for domestic work at their homes where they mostly get sexually abused. As happens in “Line-up 1”, “Line-up 2”, “Line-up 3, and “Line-up Age Twelve” scenes [22], the children are forced to stand in line, organised according to the colour of their skin. This line order is a clear violation of the UDHR for it openly endorses a racist policy from the lighter to the darker to offer visitors the freedom of choice. The children are also instructed to straighten their clothes and “sell themselves in their own particular way” [22], as Harrison exemplifies in the stage directions. In the three separate scenes titled “Unspoken Abuse” which depict the children’s returning back from the weekend outings, the playwright portrays the abused child’s feeling of humiliation. Harrison represents it in their inability to utter anything about the events of the weekend. Aboriginal children are not even permitted to relate what they pass through; they have to be silent. For example, when Ruby returns from her outings, the children find her looking miserable and dragging something behind her, once a doll and another time a book as gifts from her white abusers. She is unable to mention anything about her being abused. Likewise, though Jimmy is unable to comprehend what has happened to Ruby; initially he feels envious of her outings but only understands when he himself also experiences the same humiliation, and returns even more psychologically torn inside. As for the other three children, they welcome Ruby’s return with claps and chants of the “patty cake game” [22] nursery rhyme; but, when they enquire about her outing, she cannot respond. This reaction shows that the white people prevent the institutionalised child from relating anything that happens to her/him at their homes. It is a painful moment of Ruby’s pure innocence being marred:

CHILDREN: (*chanting*) Can you keep a secret and promise not to tell...

(*sing-song*): Where did you go?

RUBY: went to the playground.

CHILDREN: She went to the playground.

What did you eat?

RUBY: Ate fish and chips.

CHILDREN: She ate fish and chips.

What did he give to ya?

RUBY: Gave me a doll.

CHILDREN: He gave her a doll.

What else did ya do?

*They stop clapping.*

RUBY: I promised not to tell [22].

Her last statement implies the abuse that befalls her over the weekend at the home of the white people; she is suffering

from the feelings of shame that torment her and so keeps her grief within. Harrison's dramatic use of song produces a strong scenic effect in the way she fuses tragedy with humour in this episode. It provides a contrast between the tragic reality of Ruby's miserable situation and the children's good-humoured chanting of nursery rhymes and clapping. Ruby is low-spirited after her abuse; she feels isolated, lonely and desolate as opposed to the others' seeming joy while trying to entertain themselves.

Those scenes, that occur more than once, are indicative in the titles in which Harrison also numbers their frequency. After her second visit in "Unspoken Abuse 2" [22], Ruby returns more depressed, walking even slower than the first time, and is more of an introvert, unable to join them in their chants. In her low-spirited entry, hanging her head and holding her stomach as per the stage directions, she gives the same response to their chanted query of "What did he do to ya?" stating, "I promised not to tell" [22]. The irony forces itself here for it is the white abuser and the Welfare authorities who should be the ones ashamed of their acts and not the abused victim. So besides having no support from the Welfare, Ruby also repeatedly undergoes abuse from the whites who are supposed to care for her at their homes. Such torture leads her to feel embarrassed and degraded. Not only that, but the act severely harms her mental health and eventually drives her to madness.

Consequently, as a child and as an adult, she keeps hearing voices in her head and is always waiting with the expectation of someone coming to collect her. Her plight is pathetic; she grieves her condition and as a child, projects her own status of the dire need of a mother's love on her doll. She impersonates it as Ruby and herself as the mother, a feeling she has never experienced. As Notaras envisions it, "the doll becomes Ruby's only companion and she talks to it as if it were her child. All her feelings of rejection and loss, her hopes and fears, are conveyed through her conversations with her doll" [17]. She plays with it, rocks it in bed and hums a rocking nursery rhyme to it:

What are we going to do, Ruby?

Let's go to the lolly shop

Ruby, you can have anything you want

Let's buy a new dress for Ruby

Oh you look so pretty in pink

Mummy's pretty girl Ruby

Ruby, Mummy's going to get you a big present [22].

Lacking the support and kindness of a mother, she then bursts into tears and throws the doll on the floor.

In an interview with *Insight*, Harrison clarifies how she figured Ruby's character in the process of writing the play. Suffering from the emotional alienation of never recalling any memory of the sense of motherhood, the playwright says, "Ruby I saw as a child who was taken away at a very early age, as a baby, so she didn't have any mothering experience at all. So she had to kind of imagine that" [20]. This, in reality, is what Ruby is attempting. According to the UDHR, "Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance... All children... shall enjoy the same social

protection" [1], but that was violated by the Australian authorities, denying those children that right of being raised with their mothers within the family. This violation reflects the suffering of Aboriginal children that has smeared their lives. Although the core unit of Aboriginal culture is the family, Ruby is denied that and is thus incapable of realising what it means to have a mother and live in a family.

Unfortunately, in "Ruby's Descent into Madness" [22], the girl loses her sanity. When Ruby's own family discover her whereabouts after all those years, it is only to discover she is merely the remains of a ruined self. It is a sad scene to watch her falling into madness with all the white authority voices ringing in her head. Her abuse tragically destroys her being and, in truth, the nature of that unspoken abuse is labelled as such. Harrison tragically represents Ruby's troubled mental condition by making the latter imagine all the figures of her tormentors oppressing her mind. The girl suffers at the hands of the authority figures in the institution and the people she does domestic work for. She does not have the capacity to calm herself any further. In her childhood identity, she appears in a ripped dress stained with blood, and the psychological trauma of her mental state is revealed in the rapid rhythm of her off-stage tormentors' voices:

AUTHORITY FIGURE: Clean for me, Ruby.

AUTHORITY FIGURE: Wash for me, Ruby.

AUTHORITY FIGURE: Cook for me, Ruby.

RUBY: Don't need no family of me own.

AUTHORITY FIGURE: Scrub for me, Ruby.

AUTHORITY FIGURE: Nurse for me, Ruby.

AUTHORITY FIGURE: Mop for me, Ruby.

RUBY: Got enough to do.

AUTHORITY FIGURE: Shop for me, Ruby.

RUBY: Don't come crying to me with ya troubles.

AUTHORITY FIGURE: Iron for me, Ruby.

RUBY: I've got enough to do.

AUTHORITY FIGURE: Do it for me, Ruby [22].

That tragic scene continues with the rest of her oppressors' voices crowding around her with a fouler tone that intensifies to its climax when one of them shouts at her, "You dirty Abo..." [22], without even continuing the word. It is then that Ruby collapses in a nervous breakdown, rubbing her body in an obsessive manner as if trying to cleanse it from the abuse, while at the same instant she returns back to her adult identity and screams for her ever absent mother, "Where are you?" [22]. It is an excruciating experience that is antagonising for the audience to watch. As they witness every time, she is chosen for the weekend outing chores and abuse, the audience sympathise with her and fear for her situation. It is inferred that there is not much hope for her recovery.

## 2. Jimmy

The irony of the abuse extends to other characters. Not only is Ruby strongly damaged by the practiced policy and humiliation, but so is Jimmy. He is a mischievous fellow who usually gets into trouble as he steals apples from the neighbour's garden as a child, gets detained by the police and is put in custody. Nevertheless, he is hopeful and positive with

a sense of humour but his experience as an institutionalised stolen child over the years eliminates that nature. As a child, he was taken away from his mother by the racist Welfare authorities when he was just a little older than Ruby, at around two years of age. Jimmy's story is reflected in his memory when he simply takes his role as a child in the relevant scenes. All along, his mother hopes that he is having a better life at the Welfare institution. Though not knowing where he is placed, she keeps searching for him and sending him letters signed Nancy Wajurri, a name that her son does not even know. The letters never reach him as the Welfare authorities hide and file them in a cabinet, preventing him from receiving or even learning about them.

The filing cabinet that is one of the few props on the stage is very symbolic of the denial of the children's rights. Bird ascertains that the institutions used to suppress the children. They were not only forbidden from getting the letters, but also never received anything sent, even toys or clothes [19]. However, regardless of her failure to get a response, Jimmy's mother continues to try to convince the authorities in her letters that her husband is working. She does that as proof that her son could be provided for, in an attempt to take him back and keep him in his family. But her attempts are of no avail, as she does not realise Jimmy never received any of her letters. On the other hand, whenever Jimmy cries out his child's longing to go home, he is always scolded by the off-stage voice of the home's Matron. As the representative authority figure, that Matron lies to him that his mother is dead. Her insistence on the fact emotionally stabs him, for he refuses to believe it:

JIMMY: (*crying out in the dark*) I wanna go home.

MATRON: (*voice-over*): Quiet!

JIMMY: When's my mum gunna come for me?

MATRON: (*voice-over*): Your mother's not coming. She's dead.

JIMMY: (*muffled by the pillow*): She's not dead, she's not.

...

MATRON: (*voice-over*): Just forget her.

JIMMY: (*muffled by the pillow*): She wouldn't have left me alone, she's going to come for me, just you wait [22].

The innocent child's need inside him rejects what the Matron says but clings to the fact that his mother would come for him; it is a human right he is denied by the authority figure at the children's home.

That anti-rights assimilation policy practice terrified Aboriginal and Indigenous parents with fears of having their children stolen. Jimmy's flashbacks to his childhood reveal how his mother was on the alert, lest the Welfare take her son. She used to always be warning him to hide. As an off-stage character, her voice back then keeps ringing in his ears, "Oh Willy, Willy ... Don't you get caught ... The Welfare — Don't... or the Welfare... If you... the Welfare... Willy, hide! Hide! The Welfare" [22]. The only hope in life for her, as a representative of the stolen children's parents, has been to keep the children safe, away from the Welfare path.

Unlike Ruby who recalls nothing about her mother, Jimmy is somehow aware of her in his memory. Nancy is physically non-present but is heard as an off-stage voice in the projection of the letters on Jimmy's face as she reads them to him in his dreams. As Harrison puts it in the stage directions of the scene titled "Your Mum's Dead" [22], while his mother is reading the letter the audience are shown:

a silent demonstration of Jimmy being subjected to humiliation. He's being beaten (we hear the sound of the strap being applied), he's forced to clean shoes, he's sent to his room and an old tin plate of shapeless gook his dinner, is slid across the floor in his direction. We see the once happy boy slowly shutting down [22].

This projection implies the change that happens to Jimmy's character. He is being tortured as a child in the institution. The Welfare does not address his needs but rather humiliates him; it orders him around to complete tasks and does not even offer him nutritious food. The happy fellow at the beginning of the play develops into a sullen introvert. He is hurt and longs for his mother from whom he was stolen.

So, contrary to the UDHR which states that "the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State" [1], Jimmy suffers because of being split from his mother and keeps dreaming of her. He gets oppressed by the authorities and barred from seeing any members of his family. The various scenes in which his story occurs verify the whites' prohibition of family visits. Jimmy's mother fails to reach him for the 26 years of his being taken. In the two scenes titled "Your Mum's Dead" [22], Harrison provides a contrast between Nancy and the Home Matron in their treatment of Jimmy. The imaginary dialogue with his mother during the letter projection in the "What do you do?" [22] scene, dramatises his yearning for the figure of the mother he wishes to be with as opposed to the harsh Matron. The latter coldly confirms Nancy's death, without any consideration of what that would do to a child. It emphasises the disastrous impact of the removal policy on the structure of the family. Here, Kamala observes that the dialogue in his projected dreams is "an example of how the government's decision of removing the children has resulted in making the children a complete stranger to their mothers and their families" [30].

Jimmy's tragedy is close to Ruby's in its extent, but goes a step further. As previously mentioned, he does not realise what happens to Ruby on weekend outings till he himself gets chosen by a white visitor. He later returns, deeply ashamed and taking the abuse much deeper to heart, to the extent that he is unable even to speak, and it is only then does he realise what she has passed through. Jimmy's character has two extremes; it is contrasted between the beginning and ending of the play, between his initial humorous side and the miserable and introvert one he tragically develops into by the end. The humour with which he relates his past naughtiness before being stolen reveals his jolly character which is reversed with his first experience of sexual abuse.

More than the other characters, Jimmy's narrative swiftly moves from his past childhood memory to his present adult

reality through his dreams. In a moment of his adult identity in a bar as he leaves the imaginary prison cell in "Jimmy's Story" [22], an Aboriginal man recognises Jimmy's kinship to his mother from his visage. Addressing him by his Aboriginal name, Willy Wajurri, Jimmy is overwhelmed to learn that his mother is still alive and looking for him. Importantly, for the first time, he also learns her name. Living in the institution in desolate segregation from his culture, this is a moment of recognition of his real, original identity. He can discern a link with the Aboriginals who have the ability to recognise the resemblance between their folks as that Aboriginal man does. Jimmy's reaction of "So my mother's not dead" [22] exposes the lies enforced on him by the white authoritative system represented by the Matron. In clear defiance of the UDHR, racism has been endorsed by the Australian authorities against the country's Indigenous people. Later, Harrison makes this quite noticeable in the scene titled "Racist Insults", when Jimmy, in his adult identity, gets insulted as a "bloody nigger" and a "dirty black bastard" by a white racist "whitefella" [22]. Ironically, it is Jimmy, the victim, who gets detained and not the young white fellow, which shows the unjust and unfair racist attitude toward Aboriginals.

Appallingly, Jimmy's story does not end there. Sadly, Nancy dies before she sees her son again. As for Jimmy, now desperate after his expectations to see her, hangs himself in his cell, leaving her a letter with a very indicative statement that encompasses the entire tragedy of the stolen children: "I've been a thug and a thief – but I've never stolen anyone's soul" [22]. Harrison's irony is evident here. Jimmy admits to theft and gets a life sentence penalty for stealing apples. But contrariwise, the authorities that allow themselves to steal human beings' souls (or, in other words, the children) without any sense of guilt for denying them the basic fundamental rights set by the UDHR, are exempted from any penalty. It should have been the other way round. The removal policy has destroyed the children and their families, and resulted in their total loss of self that cannot be retrieved. That is a detrimental effect of the trauma that the audience is encountering in Jimmy. He is robbed of his own self alongside all levels of security and finally commits suicide, losing his life when Ruby before him loses her mind. His mother's death destroys him, as all remaining hope to see her is lost. His final words in that letter reverberate the cry as a shout addressing the whole Stolen Generations' plight: "Don't give up fighting. Don't let it happen again. Don't let them take babies from their mother's arms. Someone's gotta fight. I just can't no more" [22]. Likewise, just as his mother's letters were filed and hidden during his years in the institution, the Matron files his own, insulting him as "The bastard woulda been back here anyway" [22]. He means nothing to her and his life is worthless to the authorities. The Welfare has no pity for those Aboriginal and Indigenous children, but rather followed the policy of exterminating them. To the Matron, that simply means another inferior half-caste Aboriginal is out of the way and neither him nor his mother has any existent meaning to the whites.

### 3. Shirley

Jimmy's mother and Shirley share some common grounds in their status. Both are deeply suffering from the negative consequences of the unjust removal policy on them and their children. Each of them is searching for her child, though Shirley's is a more complex situation. Just as she herself was stolen, so is the case with her own two children, a son and a daughter. As Bird affirms, "Many members of the Stolen Generations suffered first as children who were taken and later as mothers whose children were removed" [19]. Shirley suffers the pangs of two Stolen Generations together and is deeply hurt for being in the dark as to how many grandchildren she has. Initially, when narrating her story as an adult, flashbacks go to the moment she herself was stolen. It was a heart-breaking experience on a rainy day that could not be erased from her memory. Since then, rain for her has become a significant symbol of agony and tears. She is portrayed in the two scenes that carry the same title, "It rained the Day" [22] as apprehensive of it. The stage directions present her as a child hiding under the bed sheet and humming amid the rain and thunder sounds outside,

Rain, rain go away  
I'm looking out of the back of the car  
The car's big and black  
Mummy's face is getting smaller and smaller  
She's so little I can hardly see her  
She's all blurry  
Raindrops, tears, raindrops, tears [22].

It is a vivid picture of the last moment ever for Shirley to see her mother's face; it is a horrifying experience that destroys and haunts her as a child and for the rest of her life. Raindrops here stand for tears and both are mixed together in the child's anguished mind. The torture is magnified when Shirley further recollects the rainy day when her own son was stolen. Shirley remembers she was unable to utter a word then. She says, "They just came and this woman picked him up and put him in the car". The stage directions also describe the extent of Shirley's pain stating that her "grief cannot be expressed in words" [22]. The only concrete thing she has and to which she clings is a family photo album that serves as a symbol of the value of the family that is nowhere to be found. Though painful to view, the album provides her with some dim optimistic hope for a future discovery of her children's whereabouts. In "Shirley's Memories" [22], similar to the projection of Nancy's letters over Jimmy's face, Harrison employs scenic effects to share this with the audience for, "as she traces her finger over the figures, the images are projected for all the audience to see" [22], and the audience get involved in the act. Shirley never loses hope that one day she will see her children and the grandchildren she assumes she now has. In view of that, Shirley is always knitting clothes for them till that moment comes. Repeatedly, splitting children from their mothers and breaking up the family unit is a violation of the UDHR. Bird firmly emphasises that "the conjunction of the words 'stolen' and 'children' is a horror for both parties, for the child and for the mother" [19]. It is not something relevant to race, but a natural human mother-child instinct that does not

distinguish between mothers of different skin colour or race.

Just as Shirley has been knitting for 27 years, Nancy has continued bringing an annual gift to Jimmy for the 26 years of his being stolen. That in itself signifies the passage of time that Harrison reflects in the stage directions. When Shirley displays the contents of her knitting bag, they are “from small garments to large, representing the years that she has knitted for her family without ever getting the chance to give them her symbols of love” [22]. The mothers’ pain as well as skeptical hopes in finding their children is the status of all mothers whose children are stolen, comprising another sad confirmation of the removal policy and neglecting the UDHR’s insistence on the importance of the family unit for the strength of society. Shirley echoes the sting that those Aboriginal and Indigenous mothers felt over the years by addressing the audience, “After all these years to get used to it, it still hurts” [22]. Despite the fears and pain, she tries hard to hold onto her hopes. Unlike the rest of the characters, she is the only one who is finally reunited with her daughter, Kate, and granddaughter, Tamara. On her last appearance in “Shirley’s Come Full Circle” [22], her monologue echoes the painful joy of finally reuniting with her long-stolen child. The words give just a glimpse of hope in the audience as she addresses it with “No one’s ever called me Mum. ...I’m glad, I have a daughter and a granddaughter – but more important – Tamara has a mother and a grandmother. And that’s all that matters” [22].

#### 4. Anne

From Ruby, Jimmy and Shirley to Anne, as the fourth character at the Cranby Children’s Home, the situation takes a partially diverse path. Anne basically shares the same common issue of being stolen and placed in a children’s home institution, but she is also the only one who gets adopted by white parents and so considers herself better off. To the authorities, such arrangements were in the best interest of the assimilation strategy rather than the stolen children themselves. The Australian governments regarded such white adoptive families as the ones fit to raise the half-caste child, assumingly to provide her with “a good education ... a sense of security ... And a good upbringing” [22]. In “The Chosen” [22], it is ironic that on the day of her adoption, Anne’s new parents give her a white-haired doll as a gift. The white hair is used by Harrison as an indirect indication, symbolising that Anne now belongs to the white society of her adoptive family and thus forget her Aboriginal origins.

Unable to recall anything about the children’s home she is placed in, Anne’s story as a child occurs in her adoptive family’s home where she is materially better off than the other children; she has a room of her own with good quality furniture. She neither realises nor is told about her Indigenous origin. Ashamed of her being an Aboriginal child, the white parents believe they have avoided letting her be raised as an inferior. In the scene, “Anne’s Told She’s Aboriginal” [22], they approach her sensitively and apprehensively, not knowing how to tell her:

MOTHER: Anne, there’s something else... it’s about

your mother... she’s dying and she wants to see you and ... she’s an *Aboriginal* lady.

ANNE: Why haven’t you told me that she’s –?

MOTHER: (*tentatively*) –Aboriginal?

ANNE: Alive! And that she wants to see me?

...

MOTHER: No one need ever know.

ANNE: *I* know. And I want to know why you didn’t tell me about this before.

MOTHER: (*sobbing*) The shame...

ANNE: (*angrily*) You should be ashamed –

FATHER: *We’ve* nothing to be ashamed of. *We’ve* always acted in your best interests!...

ANNE: Mum... Dad! Mum! Dad! Why? This is a nightmare! [22]

With the fading lights, the stage directions communicate her panic to the audience; she is now in a difficult situation that introduces her inner conflict. Since her parents regard Aboriginals to be inferior, they view their act of adoption as a life-saving matter for her.

To reinforce the gap between her and them, Harrison portrays them as shadows in the first scene where she narrates her story of being chosen. Torn between two worlds, those of her Aboriginal origin and her white adoptive parents, Anne is confused as to where she belongs and cannot resolve where she fits in. An implicit symbol of that is when, in the “To Tan or not To Tan” [22] scene, she reluctantly realises she does not need to apply coconut oil skin tan remarking, “Life is full of tricky situations... to tan or not to tan. (*She laughs*). Every summer I try and get a suntan. I lie out there for hours smothered in coconut oil. Coconut oil! I don’t have to – I’m black!” [22]. Still in confusion, she is in a state of denial, rejecting the truth of the shock she gets. Later, in “Am I Black or White” [22], Anne’s psychological confusion is personified in the voices of both her black and white parents after meeting her real mother and her family. Symbolising her shattered self, the voices tear her apart with their queries to which she has no answers, but keeps running back and forth on both sides of a white sheet that separates them. A damaging effect of the assimilation policy is that the blacks stress the fact that they have to unite together as Indigenous people against the white society to define their identity; this is obvious when she is firmly confronted with one of the black voices, “You have to earn your place if you wanna be involved in our community” [22]. Each group pushes her hard to decide upon her identity as to who she belongs to, but she has no answer:

WHITE VOICES: (*together, off*) Who do you think you are?

BLACK VOICES: (*together, off*) Who do you think you are? [22]

At such juxtaposition and with the voices murmuring the same question, Anne needs to settle upon who she is. She takes the decision to quickly remove the sheet between both groups to face each other. This is an indication of her endorsing both cultures, which is mostly the case with the



majority of Aboriginal and Indigenous children who are adopted by white families. Kamala claims that the question of identifying who she is, “points at the identity, social, racial, cultural and spiritual problems” [30] of one’s origin. Bewildered, she addresses the audience with her final monologue in “Anne’s Scene” wondering, “What about me? What do I want? I don’t know. I don’t know where I belong anymore” [22]. She just decides to keep both families and thus maintains herself between the black and white cultures, the result of the traumatic experience of being removed from her community.

### 5. Sandy

Besides sharing common things with the rest, Sandy’s narrative, as the last stolen character at the home, bears a closer link to his Aboriginal identity than the other children. Similarly, he suffers from the negative impact of the removal policy and has always been escaping from the government. Having an unsettled childhood, he has no specific place to stay. To prevent his being stolen by the Welfare, Sandy’s mother used to send him away to hide in her relatives’ homes. All he can recall is her scared voice shouting, “Sandy, Run!” [22], believing it is the only way to protect him. He is entangled in a life of continuous escape and hiding, always on the road to find a ‘home’, considering his suitcase as his home that he keeps carrying with him. In Sandy’s childhood flashbacks, he describes being caught by the Welfare authorities and taken from his mother because they accused her of being unfit to raise her children. The reason behind that is outside her control; she had an expired can of peas in her cupboard. But, the irony is that she received the canned peas from the Welfare authorities themselves. Because of that, Sandy’s frustration with the authorities is portrayed in the scene titled “A Can of Peas” [22]. In his adult identity, the rising suspense of that accusation incident is clarified as Sandy builds a pyramid of cans then angrily kicks it, crying out in a loathing tone:

I hate peas. Always have. You want me to tell you why? When Mum was real desperate she’d scrounge shit like this from the Welfare. White flour, white sugar, white bread. No good. Instant mash potato. Stuck to ya mouth like glue. Tinned camp pie. The stink! Like bloody dog meat. But the can of peas I hated most. Just looking at the bloody can I can taste them. Slimy. Soggy. Yuk. A can of peas. A can like this one ruined my family. True, a can of peas. Destroyed my mother and us kids. Mum didn’t steal it or nothin’ like that. She wasn’t shoved in jail or anything. It was just when they finally caught up with us, a can just like this little one was sitting way at the back of the cupboard – past its used date – so they said she was just unfit mother and they took us kids away. All because of a use-by date. The bloody Welfare, who gave us the rotten can in the first place. A can of peas [22].

The irony of his agonizing humour is in the utter denial and disrespect of the Aboriginals’ rights. The authorities allow themselves to give expired food to the people of the land then

manipulate that to accuse them of being unfit to raise their children. On this event framework of his narrative, Sutherland argues that Sandy’s point here “made the ‘white Welfare’ (an oxymoron in this context) largely responsible for replacing indigenous eating habits with ‘White flour, white sugar, white bread’, a diet with repercussions that are still causing havoc for Aboriginal health” [31]. That is why hating or rather detesting peas, as quite obvious in Sandy’s speech, is a representative image of his detesting the white Australian authorities and their inhuman treatment of Aboriginals.

On a different note, Sandy is the one strongly attached to the land and the preservation of their Indigenous languages. In a harsh attempt to make them lose their heritage as part of the process of assimilation, stolen children are prohibited from speaking their Indigenous languages. However, contrary to such instructions, Sandy insists on mentioning native words as the “yurringa” (the sun). He also tells native stories of “the big bad Mungee” [22] that comes and eats babies in the dark and relates the myth of the red desert. The story resonates ironic overtones; the only way the elders could rid the community of Mungee was to cast a spell on it which turned it into a pale, or rather white, colour. To Aboriginals, the white colour now stands for the evil of the whites towards them. Even though Shirley warns him, “But you’re not allowed to say that” [22], Sandy is fearless and continues to narrate the story which he confirms was told to him by his grandfather. This serves as evidence by Harrison, as to how Aboriginal and Indigenous people preserve their heritage through oral story telling passed from one generation to the other, and how they prevent their language from becoming a dead one as the assimilation policy intended. Bell insists that “It is a mistake to dismiss our languages as part of history, and long gone. They’re not. They are alive and vibrant. They are in a new phase of growth. They’re part of us as the Indigenous people of the land. Our languages are the voice of the land, and we are the carriers of the languages” [32]. Aborigines cherish their land and their languages as these embody their whole culture and identity, and thus, the land is not just a geographical location they are removed from. The same is restated by Duncan with regards to their concept of the land when he affirms, “the removal of Aboriginal people to reserves and missions disrupted their lives and culture, as did the government policy of social engineering which forced assimilation of the mixed-blood children” [33].

In “Desert Sands” [22], Harrison emphasises the same cultural preservation theme of oral storytelling. As in “Sandy’s Story of the Mungee” [22] scene, Sandy gathers the children around him to relate his story. This time it is another spiritual dreaming myth of the creation of the red sands desert of his people, after which his mother named him. The audience learn that he himself came into being as a result of a white man’s raping of his mother in the desert. Having that awareness of a spiritual connection to his culture, Sandy believes that his identity is linked to it and that his future would also have the same relation. Evidently, Harrison portrays him as the one mostly related to his native origins and who might be able to preserve the future of Aboriginal and Indigenous people’s

culture, language and identity. To her, Sandy is the main character in the play who has an obvious link with Aboriginal culture; because the assimilation policy could not completely erase it in him.

Alongside presenting individual children's stories, the forced servitude in the institution not only exposes the children to humiliation, but also foreshadows the dim future that awaits them. The authorities do not provide the children with anything but domestic work. They are not living a life that is applicable to their young ages. On the contrary, it is a life of orders, instructions and forced domestic work that they do in the institution and outside in white homes. When Ruby asks about their future jobs in the "Cleaning Routine 2" [22] scene, the majority of the professions mentioned do not fit them as Aboriginal children. As the scene begins, the stage directions indicate that the children start to list professions such as nurse, fireman, doctor, teacher and the like. While doing so, they mime the action that goes with each profession. Yet they receive no positive response from the authority figure represented in an off-stage voice. The voice only confirms the job of domestic service, which is symbolised by the broom that the children are using to clean the place with.

Apparently, there is no bright future for those institutionalised stolen children. They realise and acknowledge they could not lead any other type of life. The irony of their status is further emphasised with their singing to the "We're happy little Vegemites" tune to list the jobs they are trained to do, only concluding with cooks, cleaners, drain diggers and washing tasks, realizing they "will earn much less ... Because we love to work like slaves" [22]. Such a fusion of painful humour in singing with the tragic situation of their reality is very dramatic. It creates an image that bears sarcastic overtones in the underlying racism of vegemite, which is a popular black-coloured Australian spread brand that was invented by a white Australian and which is rich in healthy ingredients. Ironically, those children are not healthy, whether physically, emotionally or psychologically, and the humiliation they are forced to endure does not prepare them for any better status in a racist society. The children are merely trained to do domestic service and nothing beyond that. In addition, they could not even have the luxury to expect any better job after living in such an institution.

It is, hence, so painfully ironic that the Cranby Children's Home includes the word home when it does not bear any connection with its connotation. It is not even close to the replacement of a real one, when the meaning of the word does not apply. Since the word encompasses love and peace within the family, then that meaning is far-fetched from the context of the play. It is the violation of the UDHR by the Australian authorities that derived the Indigenous children from the comfort of having a real home. Realising the meaning of home is what will help them get reconciled with their identity as Aboriginals. The children realise that the institution is not their home; on the contrary, it is the location where they were placed after being dislocated from their original homes, their parents, family and community in an ironic reversal of its real embodiment. In the final scene of the play, "Sandy at the End

of the Road" [22], as the children are in their adult identities, they reflect on what home is to each. Ruby's current disastrous condition as a total introvert domestic makes her scream at her little sister's comment that they have come to take her home saying, "Don't live in no home any more. I work for the Hardwicks. ... Don't need no trouble" and her final decision is, "Don't need no home of me own. I've got enough to do" [22]. To Jimmy, home is when he is finally going to meet his mother, but it turns out to be an unfulfilled hope that leads to his complete loss of self. To him, home is not what the Welfare provides, it is the warmth of motherhood that is, unfortunately, taken from him just as he has earlier been stolen from her. As for Anne with the communication gap between her and her white adoptive family, she has never felt or lived the real meaning of a home, but links it to having better economic standards. Accordingly, she is lingering between the worlds of both cultures and thus home does not indicate the real sense of the word.

Opposite to that, Shirley and Sandy have different perspectives that might offer some hope as to the concept of home. Shirley finally remarks, "They say home is where the heart is" [22]; it is the sense of family identity with its different generations that encompasses her daughter and granddaughter, a feeling she has not lived since her daughter was stolen as a child. Lastly, Sandy ascertains that he is going back "home". After being "always on the run" [22] without having a home to stay, he reaches his own notion of what home means. In "Sandy Revisits the Children's Home" [22], he ironically discovers the children's 'home' is being transformed into "luxury apartments" when it used to be a place of torment for him and the other children. The humour here lies in the fact that the off-stage voice mentions that the real estate office will not remove the building's iron bars but will keep them. The bars remind him of the first time he entered the institution as a child, since it had no connection to the meaning of a home but an image of a prison with iron bars. Sandy's notion of home is in the red deserts which bear the spiritual connotations of his Aboriginal origin as exemplified in his own name and in the place where there is no harassment or abuse. He strongly admits, "Been everywhere. Except one place. Home. ... Back to me place. That bit of red desert. I still remember it. The sand must have seeped into me brain, like did everything else. ... I don't have to run anymore ... I'm going – home ... it's calling me – home" [22]. To him, the meaning of home is in cherishing his Aboriginal identity. He perceives it in the preservation of the land and his Indigenous people's languages. In short, it is in the wider scope of the historical heritage and maintaining the traditions of storytelling that is firmly connected to it. This would be his only significant comfort zone and the main ray of hope viewed by Harrison towards preserving Aboriginal and Indigenous heritage.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In addressing the deprivation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders' Stolen Generations' human rights, Harrison reveals how those natives' rights have been utterly

disrespected by the colonial authorities. Through utilising a non-linear structure, merging tragedy with comedy, symbolism, references to race, light and dark colours among others exemplified in the analysis, she has managed to reveal to the audience, especially the non-Indigenous one, the children's traumatic experiences and their present impact on them. They suffer from PTSD as well as its corruptive effect on their families. Her portrayal of it, however, reflects the fortitude of the Aboriginal communities in attempting to preserve their identity and heritage as opposed to the injustices they have encountered. That part of Australia's dark history with regards to its sociological bearing was not known to be so excruciating to the majority of the white society. It confronts that part of society by laying bare the reality of the situation and the atrocities that befell the Aboriginal and Indigenous communities. As Sharmila exposes, "*Stolen* seeks to tell the truth. The truth told by the Aborigines is different from the white version. These texts also become a place to preserve one's family, history and heritage" [13]. So, through the representation of the children's plight, the playwright presents how their narratives could help in leading towards resolving the issue of Aboriginal and Indigenous identity.

Harrison's play made a difference in addressing the Stolen Generations' tragedy. It is currently an essential work in the educational curriculum in Australian schools as she mentions in her interview with Carroll [34]. Following this work, several Indigenous dramatists wrote plays addressing the same problem. Those works flourished and promoted not only Aboriginal theatre, but the Indigenous performers as well [35]. Other positive outcomes came in 1997 with the issuing of *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* (UNDRIP) which "Solemnly proclaims the...United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a standard of achievement to be pursued in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect" [36]. Their rights have been acknowledged by the United Nations. This UNDRIP was later followed by a research report titled '*Not one size fits all' Understanding the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal children*' in 2012. This report, in which Harrison also participated, tackles both the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal children. It helped in considering certain measures to be taken with respect to the Aboriginal children's "cultural identity and connection" [37]. In the report, it is also stated that its collaborative team will embark on another study that intends to assist in healing the trauma suffered by Aboriginal people. It hypothesises that such efforts to heal the community could be effective if young Indigenous people "develop a positive connection with culture" [37].

It is worth noting that the 1997 *Bringing Them Home Report* [18] apology request was made in 2008 after ongoing debate and resistance from the parliament members. Kevin Rudd, the Australian prime minister at the time, gave a long speech in which he apologised for all the wrongs committed by the previous Commonwealth governments against Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders' Stolen Generations. To quote a short extract from his speech that he considered an act of reconciliation he declared:

It is time to say sorry. ... To the stolen generations, I say the following: as Prime Minister of Australia, I am sorry. On behalf of the government of Australia, I am sorry. On behalf of the parliament of Australia, I am sorry. I offer you this apology without qualification. We apologise for the hurt, the pain and suffering that we, the parliament, have caused you by the laws that previous parliaments have enacted. We apologise for the indignity, the degradation and the humiliation these laws embodied. We offer this apology to the mothers, the fathers, the brothers, the sisters, the families and the communities whose lives were ripped apart by the actions of successive governments under successive parliaments [38].

However, research on the Stolen Generations does not end here. With the turn of the millennium, many of the victims are still suffering from the traumatic detriment of the assimilation policy. Therefore, it is recommended that research on the subject continues so all living victims of the Stolen Generations can attain the fulfilment of their lost identity. Harrison, as an Indigenous person, admits that she herself lived the experience of not quite realising where she fit in until she completed this play. In an interview with Drysdale [20], Harrison embraces the value of the process of writing *Stolen* because it assisted her in getting to know her own identity. Here, it is appropriate to close with her words:

I was someone who had always been aware of my Aboriginal heritage but really didn't know ... where I fitted in. This was a fantastic opportunity for me to find out what it means to be Indigenous and make connections that I'm still trying to make and find out where I belong because I have this really strong longing to belong in that community [20].

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